



# Wildlife

## Chapter 2

Preserving, promoting and managing Wisconsin's wildlife populations and their habitats and promoting wildlife enjoyment and appreciation to benefit current and future generations

The Fish & Wildlife Account pays for \$23.6 million or 86 percent of the \$27.6 million spent on wildlife programs, including 187 of the 211 positions assigned to wildlife programs.

The remaining 24 positions and \$4 million are funded through general tax funds, the Endangered Resources state income tax check-off and state vehicle license plate sales, federal and state grants and the rest of the Conservation Fund.

### How does the Wildlife program use your money?

(in millions of dollars)

Conduct research and monitor diseases	6.8
Develop regulations, issue permits, reimburse farmers for crop damage	5.6
Improve habitat and monitor wildlife populations	4.1
Manage public lands	1.8
Stock game species	0.6
Inform and educate the public	1.4
Pay program operations costs (equipment, repairs, maintenance, fuel, etc.)	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$23.6</b>

### FY04 Wildlife Funding Sources

Funding Source	\$ (in millions)	%
<b>Fish &amp; Wildlife Account</b>		
License Fees	11.3	41
Turkey Stamp	0.7	3
Pheasant Stamp	0.3	1
Waterfowl Stamp	0.5	2
Pittman Robertson Federal Aid	4.0	14
Wildlife damage surcharge	3.5	13
Misc. grants and donations	3.3	12
Fish & Wildlife Account Subtotal	23.6	86
<b>Rest of Conservation Fund</b>	2.5	9
<b>General Taxes (GPR)</b>	1.5	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>27.6</b>	<b>100</b>

### What did the Wildlife program accomplish for you in 2003–2004?

**Chronic Wasting Disease control:** Maintaining the health of Wisconsin's white-tailed deer herd by controlling chronic wasting disease (CWD) is the top priority for the wildlife program. Research, disease surveillance, public outreach, and aggressive deer population reduction strategies remain keys to our efforts to eradicate the disease.

CWD is a statewide issue. Although confined to two areas in southern Wisconsin, the department is confident that if nothing is done, the disease will continue to spread geographically. Colorado, Wyoming and Nebraska, where CWD also is present, already show this pattern.

Economically, deer hunting supports thousands of jobs in Wisconsin and is estimated to contribute close to \$1 billion to the state's economy. The wildlife program is committed to doing everything it can to control the spread of CWD and eventually eradicate it.

**Managing wildlife populations:** We worked with citizens and conservation groups to set quotas, hunting rules and regulations. We responded to 6,499 complaints about nuisance wildlife and received 3,590 contacts to the Urban Wildlife Program. Wildlife Management issued 372 permits to raise, rehabilitate, stock and collect game species.

**Improve habitat and manage wildlife species:** Our staff restored wetlands, maintained grasslands and forest openings, and built nests, dams, and other structures to create or enhance habitat on five million acres of publicly-owned land and about 18,600 acres of privately-owned land. Staff provided technical assistance enabling 1,570 landowners to improve habitat on their land.

**Manage public lands:** We improved access by leasing 125,942 acres as public hunting grounds and acquiring 9,939 acres for long-term wildlife management. Our wildlife staff manage about 500,000 acres of hunter-accessible public lands to provide suitable habitat for game species.

**Stock game species:** While we stress maintaining healthy, naturally-reproducing wildlife populations by enhancing habitat, stocking operations also are important for certain species. We raised and released 36,020 pheasants on 153 state properties and provided 53,000 day-old chicks to 73 conservation and hunting groups that raise and release the birds.

**Reimburse farmers for wildlife damage:** We issued 667 shooting permits and paid \$1.8 million in claims—a dollar from every license and all bonus permit sales revenue -- to farmers for crops damaged by bear, deer, elk, geese and turkeys in 2003. There were 7,160 deer harvested on shooting permits.

**Inform and educate the public:** Our interpretive programs and outdoor skills classes reached more than 33,572 people ranging from toddlers to senior citizens. We reached the broader public through media articles and interviews, and by answering questions at fairs, sports shows and Farm Technology Days.

**Venison donations:** Wisconsin hunters donated 10,938 deer to the 2004 Venison Donation Program, resulting in approximately 500,000 pounds of meat donated to needy families across Wisconsin.

## Budget reductions in 2003-2004

- To reduce operations costs, and to carry out budget reductions required in the 2003-05 State Biennial Budget, the Wildlife program:
- Reduced pheasant stocking on public hunting grounds 65 percent.
- Reduced wildlife population surveys and habitat maintenance and improvement projects.
- Cut nature and education programs 50 percent.
- Reduced assistance for wildlife nuisance complaints.
- Terminated many public hunting ground leases.

## Where are we going in 2004–2005?

**Habitat protection and development:** We will continue to emphasize habitat improvement efforts, using partnerships to stretch the funds provided through the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund, species stamps, North American Waterfowl Conservation Act, and other sources.

**Bird Conservation:** The DNR has renewed its commitment to conserving the greater prairie chicken and grassland ecosystems with the approval of an updated Greater Prairie Chicken Management Plan. The DNR has continued to work with over 130 conservation partners to further the efforts of the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative (WBCI). WBCI has been very active spearheading a comprehensive bird conservation plan for the state, identifying Wisconsin's Important Bird Areas (IBAs), offering a number of bird conservation-related workshops, and furthering and expanding partner efforts for bird conservation. WBCI announced a small grants program starting in November 2004, and has dedicated money and efforts toward the greater prairie chicken effort in central Wisconsin.

**CWD efforts:** The department is using a learn-and-adapt approach to managing CWD by basing management strategies on research and surveillance findings as the information becomes available. During the 2004-05 deer hunting season, disease surveillance efforts focused in and around the two disease eradication zones, southeast Wisconsin and areas near CWD-positive game farms.

The department has sampled 75,000 deer for CWD since 2002, when the disease was first discovered in the state. Although the total CWD-affected area currently covers more than 1,300 square miles, more than 80 percent of CWD-positive deer have come from a 126-square-mile area bounded by Spring Green, Mazomanie, Black Earth, Mount Horeb and Ridgeway.

Herd reduction is a key way to manage CWD and we continue to rely on the cooperation of hunters and landowners to achieve reduce the herd. Staff liaisons making door-to-door

contacts with landowners, landowner and hunter surveys, public information pieces, incentive programs, a toll-free CWD information phone line, and other mechanisms are in place to help us stay in touch with landowners and hunters, address their concerns and desires, and foster support for CWD management strategies.

To safeguard Wisconsin's deer-hunting tradition and protect its economic, cultural and ecological importance, the department remains committed to eradicating CWD from Wisconsin, though eradication will be a long-term process requiring a lot of resources.

**Customer Service:** In FY 2005, we will be working to implement deer season and regulation streamlining recommendations, which were developed this past year in response to requests from deer hunters to simplify deer regulations. Additionally, we will continue to provide customers with information on captive wildlife-related licenses and regulations. Finally, we will strive to improve accessibility to the various hunting and trapping regulations and find ways to help customers understand these regulations.

**Wildlife research:** Studies under way include:

- an investigation of wild duck productivity on private wetlands and grasslands in southern Wisconsin where habitat has been restored;
- a study testing methods to regenerate oak forests for wildlife and the entire oak ecosystem;
- a study of the effects of mercury on common loon populations
- evaluating grassland bird management on large landscapes;
- evaluation of biological control of purple loosestrife to restore native vegetation beneficial to wildlife;
- a large-scale study to determine ways to manage northern hardwood forests to accommodate more wildlife needs and increase biological diversity;
- a study to determine habitat needs for the golden-winged warbler;
- a number of studies investigating CWD and the effectiveness of CWD management;
- more than 60 annual surveys monitoring the size and harvest of wildlife populations; and
- an evaluation of deer population monitoring by assessing sex-age-kill population estimates, harvest predictions and other deer population models.